

# NEIGHBORHOOD



## WATCH



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Chief of Police

## NEWSLETTER

MAY / JUNE 2004

**POLICE BUSINESS 898-3315**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH EXT. 590**

**GRAFFITI REMOVAL 895-2876**  
**CODE ENFORCEMENT 898-3311**

### GANGS AND GANG AFFILIATION

Gang involvement can begin as early as elementary school. Children as young as seven or eight years old have been recruited to work for gangs and have become gang members.

Parents and educators should watch for signs that their children or students may be involved with gangs. Changes in a child's behavior or activities which can be early warning signs of gang involvement, include:

- Decline in grades.
- Change of friends.
- Truancy.
- Keeping late hours.
- Alcohol and other drug use.
- Having large sums of money or expensive items which cannot be explained.

- Developing major attitude problems with parents, teachers or others in authority.
- Glamorizing gangs.
- Secretive or an abrupt change of behavior.
- Withdrawing from the family.
- Abrupt changes in music tastes, clothing styles.
- The presence of body modifications, including tattoos, scarring, burns and brands.

### TELL-TALE SIGNS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP CAN INCLUDE:

- The presence of gang graffiti in the bedroom or on books, clothing, athletic shoes, posters and bedroom walls.
- Wearing gang clothing or an importance placed on a certain color.
- The use of hand signs to communicate with other gang



members, siblings, teachers and parents.

- Having photos showing gang names, slogans, insignia, hand signals or individuals involved in gang activities.
- Using gang-style language.

Once in a gang, the child's behavior can change either gradually or suddenly, but it generally follows a pattern. To be accepted by the gang, the new member adopt a defiant attitude toward authority figures. This defiance may be expressed by disruptive or violent behavior at school or at home. It may also lead to frequent contacts by the police or a probation officer.

### **PREVENTION: TAKE ACTION**

The key to prevention is taking action! Prevention is part of a formula to building healthy communication and reducing gang activity. Everyone and every community can work on solutions to minimize problems. The most important thing an individual can do is get involved.

### **WHAT PARENTS CAN DO.**

Parents who suspect gang activity should take steps to intervene. Any concerned parent, teacher or community member can get involved in stemming gang membership.

The following are some suggested steps:

- Increase your awareness of your child's belongings, clothes and room. It is OK to look at what is in your child's room.
- Know who your child's friends are and where they "hang out", especially after school.
- Meet the parents of your children's friends, know where they live and get a telephone contact number.
- Be willing to identify and address the dynamics within your family, as well as factors within the neighborhood and school, that could be contributing to your child's gang involvement. This process is more difficult to do because you have to be candid and refuse to let denial affect your assessment.
- Talk with your child. Get answers to your questions about their behavior and discuss the consequences of being in a gang. At the same time let them know you love and care for them. Give them a sense that together, you can work things out. Don't be afraid to say, "I am sorry," when appropriate.
- Talk with school officials and counselors. Understand what is required of your child at school. Know the homework and assignment schedules. Hold you children accountable for their



school work.

- Let your child participate in band, school sports or after-school clubs.
- Join the PTA and get involved at school, even if it is for one hour a week or a couple of hours a month. Participate in activities at school, if at all possible, because it shows your children that you care.

## CONCLUSION

Many view gangs as law enforcement's responsibility. With the spread of gangs and increasing gang-related violence, we can no longer afford to deny their presence and hope for the best. Joining or belonging to a gang not only subjects the member's family, friends and neighbors to potential crime and violence, it also can deprive young people of their potential by inhibiting their education and squelching their employment opportunities. All of us— parents, youth, clergy, businesses educators, law enforcement and local government— can work together to steer youth away from gangs and to help those already involved to leave a gang. Together we can give at-risk youth our time, attention and alternatives to gang life.

## CITIZEN ACADEMY

The next Citizen Academy will be starting as soon as the class is full. The Academy is free and meets once a week for eleven weeks. The weekly meetings include informational lectures, demonstrations, discussion groups and hands-on activities from actual police training.

Weekly topics include:

- ◆ Criminal Law
- ◆ Domestic Violence
- ◆ Gangs
- ◆ Investigative Procedures
- ◆ Internal Affairs
- ◆ Laws of Arrest
- ◆ Narcotics
- ◆ Officer Safety
- ◆ Traffic
- ◆ Forensic Service

If you or anyone you know would be interested in attending the Citizen Academy please contact Police Service Officer Ken Edwards at 898-3315 Ext. 590.



